


Fr Charles Barclay

Fr Charles Barclay was born in London in 1938. He was educated at Blairs Junior Seminary in Aberdeen and at Drygrange. He was ordained a Priest in Edinburgh in 1961 for St Andrew's and Edinburgh Archdiocese. His first appointment was as assistant Priest at St Mary's in Stirling from 1962 to 1964. His next posting was at St John Vianney's in Edinburgh for 5 years from 1964 to 1969.

At this point Fr Barclay went to Eire to work in the Catechetical Centre in Dundalk for a year and upon returning to Scotland in 1970 became Professor at Drygrange Seminary for 8 years until 1978. He returned to parish work at St Andrew's Livingston in 1978 where he stayed until 1984. His last parish posting before a spell on foreign missions was to St Marie's in Kirkcaldy from 1984 to 1988.

Fr Barclay then went on foreign missionary work to South America, most notably Brazil, where he stayed until his return to Scotland in 1990. It was then that he came to Kilsyth shortly after the sudden death of Fr Bernard Doonan who had been the previous Parish Priest of St Patrick's. Working with assistant Priest Fr Steve Gilhooley who himself had only recently arrived in Kilsyth shortly before Fr Doonan's sudden death, Fr Barclay became the Parish Administrator until a new permanent Parish Priest could be found. In January 1991 Fr Gerry Hand was appointed the new PP of St Patrick's and after a short period of overlap Fr Barclay was then appointed as the Parish Priest of St John the Baptist at Corstorphine in Edinburgh.

<p>Please pray for</p>  <p>Father Charles Barclay <i>RIP</i></p> <p>Born 31 July 1938 Ordained 18 March 1961 Died 1 March 2001</p> <p><i>I thank my God each time I think of you! And when I pray for you I pray with joy!</i></p>	<p>In loving memory of our dear friend</p> <p>Charlie Barclay</p> <p><i>We thank you Lord for the life-time of service given to your Church by our friend Charlie.</i></p> <p><i>We pray that you will grant him a full share in the peace and joy of eternity.</i></p> <p><i>We pray that he may go on living in our minds and hearts and that all of us, in solidarity and friendship here on earth, become more deeply aware of your promise to be faithful to us in life and in death.</i></p> <p><i>Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him.</i></p> <p><i>May he rest in peace. Amen.</i></p>
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Fr Barclay died in 2001 at the age of 63 after spending 40 years as a priest.

Rev. Charlie Barclay - 1st March 2001.

Father Charles Barclay parish priest of St John the Baptist's, Corstorphine, Edinburgh died on the 1st March 2001 in the 63rd year of his life and the 40th of his priesthood. At the Funeral Mass in St John's on Wednesday the 7th March, the following homily was delivered by Fr Michael Fallon, parish priest of St Michael's Gracemount, Edinburgh.

'I suspect that many of you are sitting, wondering *'How is he ever going to manage this?'* How can you reduce Charlie's life to a presentation that takes ten minutes??? Well you can relax because I don't feel restricted to ten minutes.

Charlie, it may surprise you, was born in London on the 31st July 1938. He was the first of eight children born to Mary McDermott and Charles Barclay. The family moved back to Fauldhouse and it was there that Charlie was raised. When he finished his education at St John the Baptist's School in Fauldhouse he went off to Blairs to begin his secondary Education in preparation for the priesthood. He went from there to St Andrew's College Drygrange where he studied Philosophy and Theology. He was ordained in St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh by the then Archbishop Gordon Joseph Gray on the 18th March 1961.

He was appointed to St Mary's in Stirling where he spent a couple of years learning his trade. Friendships dating from that time still thrive. Then came an appointment to St John Vianney's in Gilmerton, where he spent over 5 years. This was a very formative time for Charlie as well as being a period of gestation. He developed an interest in and a liking for Catechetics. He was a natural and gifted communicator. He collaborated and worked with the then Margo Gorman, now Donaghue, who taught in the school there. It was in St John Vianney's Parish that he also pioneered the whole parish mission concept that was to provide the basis of pastoral formation for a generation of future priests in seminary.

In 1969 Cardinal Gray asked Charlie to go the Mount Oliver Institute in Dundalk to study Catechetics. After graduating from there he was appointed to the staff of St Andrew's College Drygrange as Spiritual Director and Director of Pastoral Formation also lecturing in Catechetics and Liturgy. As Spiritual Director he was preceded by Jock Dalrymple and succeeded by Keith O'Brien.

In 1979 Charlie was appointed to succeed Fr John F. Byrne in St Andrew's Livingston, where he developed the Team Ministry approach to pastoral work. He was committed to the ecumenical dimension of ministry in the New Town and was whole hearted in promoting shared faith experiences. Ecumenism has always been close to the heart of his work and it is pleasing to see so many of the fraternal of Ministers here this afternoon. He was in Livingston until 1984 when he was appointed to succeed Gus Neilson at St Marie's in Kirkcaldy. He was to have been joined there by his long term dear friend and mentor Jock Dalrymple but sadly he died of a sudden heart attack and although his belongings arrived there, in fact he didn't. That was a hard blow for Charlie. In Kirkcaldy he used the huge baronial parish house to full effect by opening it up to the parish.

The house was always busy; people were always around even just to drink coffee and chat. It became a haven for the young people. With his flair for order and organisation he structured the parish and set up working groups to administer the affairs of the parish. He empowered the people to take control of their parish, always reminding them that he would move on; and that the parish belonged to them.

He established the R.C.I.A. – and how! The first year there were 22 candidates and the parishioners filled two double deckers for the Rite of Election at the Cathedral. He spent a lot of energy building up standards of excellence in the celebration of the Liturgy. And then he turned his mind to making the house of God a worthy place for liturgical celebration by implementing the Liturgical Decrees of the Second Vatican Council. He used all the existing materials in the church, wood and stone, to re-order the church and re-create more suitable and fitting church furniture.

And there came a point in 1988 when he could have sat back a bit and relaxed. Because make no mistake - he had a model parish. The place was really alive. He had every right to enjoy the fruit of his years of planting. But that was never Charlie. There were new experiences and further challenges and different need that he felt drawn to respond to.

In 1988 he volunteered to go to Brazil with the Kiltegan Fathers. On his 50th birthday, he had his farewell party in the Town Hall in Kirkcaldy and off he went to take on a very difficult language; a totally new culture; giving up home comforts – I expect many of you will remember his letter home describing how he had to sweep out frogs, lying inches deep, in the house he went to live in....

On his return home he served for a couple of months at St Patrick's Kilsyth. And then he came here to St John the Baptist's in Corstorphine. And what do you know..... Didn't that description of his earlier work in Kirkcaldy ring bells for you here? He started all over again. The excellence of the Liturgy; the beauty and peace of the Oratory; the splendour of this re-ordered worship space; it speaks volumes. I remember a lady in the parish who's in her nineties saying to me *'You know he upset a lot of people when he changed things; but now we know what he did was right. Now we understand.'*

I want to send out a signal here. I know that the Archbishop won't hear these words. If he does, I might get the sack! This is YOUR parish. Charlie helped you to define priorities; he encouraged you to take ownership of the decision-making processes that sustain and nourish parish life. If you allow anyone to take that from you, then his work here will have been in vain.

Priests don't grow on trees..... Priests come from families, families like yours. Charlie comes from an extraordinary family; and not just his immediate siblings and their offspring. 'The Cousins' was a phrase I heard him use often. The extended Barclay and McDermott families in Fauldhouse and in so many locations throughout the world have been such a huge influence on and support to Charlie since the day he first went to Blairs. You took collective responsibility for him. Your generosity astonished him. He couldn't believe his luck to belong to such good people who were so kind, generous and supportive. As a Church we acknowledge that and we thank you.

And then there's the sisters. The Archbishop has already spoken of their generosity. Well, I will ask one question, make no plea and rest my case. What man do you know or have ever heard about, has four women who would travel 6000 miles, leaving family house and jobs to indulge this man.

Ellen, Mary, Ann and Kathleen. You are the 'bees' knees!' Charlie was so astonished that you would think he was worth the effort. He loved you, every one of you; he thought you were so special; such a grace. He was so proud of you and your children and grandchildren. And if you think I am labouring the point, it is for good purpose. Perhaps the greatest grace to emerge from this whole tragic illness is that Charlie, perhaps for the first time in his whole life, knew beyond any doubt, that he was so loved and cherished and held in such high esteem. He couldn't believe that so many people took the time to think to phone or to send a card or hand in flowers or send in food. Maybe there is a lesson for us all there. Perhaps we should try to become more aware of the necessity of ensuring that the people around us at

home, in the parish or at work know that they are held in high esteem and are loved and cherished. And they won't know unless we show them.

Charlie's family all emigrated to sunnier climes. All of his sisters live in Vancouver. He had many, many happy holidays over in Canada, not least the memorable camping expeditions he had with Ann, Frank and their family.

In the absence of his family here, he was blessed with deep friendship from so many people. But there were three families that were truly special to him. He was blessed with adopted status in the Munroe family; he was also adopted and enjoyed the company of the Burt family from Shotts; Eileen and her children, and her father Peter and his family. And he also enjoyed the friendship of the Rodgers family; Isabella and David and most of all young Hannah who gave him such great joy.

He had a breadth of hobbies and interest; he would try anything, some things only the once. But over the years, bridge, astronomy, badminton, table tennis, the rowing machine, gardening and of course Celtic – were his great interest and pastimes. Whatever he took up, it was always with serious intent. He couldn't not be wholehearted.

Charlie was in charge of security at Murrayfield for the Papal visit. He met the Pope there. He also met Mother Theresa. She came to tea in the parish house in Livingston when she opened her house there for her sisters. You would wonder which of these encounters he would consider to be number one. The matter became academic when on the 30th December last year, he had a visit from Martin O'Neil, the Celtic Manager. He popped in on his way home to wish Charlie well for 5 minutes – he stayed for an hour and a half. Charlie was really quite unwell at that time, but he excelled himself and revelled in the chat. The visit gave him such a great lift. Those who love Charlie will be ever grateful to Martin for being so generous.

And if I may just say, I will be eternally grateful to you Keith for allowing me the opportunity to work with Charlie in Kirkcaldy. We worked well together. We had two and a half years together and it was fun; and dare I say very productive. I also want to thank you publicly for the many calls you made on Charlie in the hospital and here at home. He really enjoyed your visits and the pastoral care, spiritual support and friendship you offered.

Charlie took an active role in Scottish Marriage Care, was a member of the National and Diocesan Liturgy Commission, He represented the Church on the Fife Regional Council Educational Committee. He was Chaplain to Queen Margaret University College. He also served for three years recently as the Archbishop's close collaborator and advisor as Diocesan Pastoral Director. He regularly attended Living Theology Courses. He loved going to Theological, Liturgy and music conferences; he got great stimulation in the exchange of ideas with people from various parts of the world.

He had a thirst for knowledge, a razor-sharp intellect, iron self-discipline and all this combined with an absolute love of the finer things in life. He recently recounted a story from Jewish legend 'On judgement day the question God will ask of us is simply *"Did you enjoy my creation?"* and he said, *"My answer will be a resounding yes – I did enjoy your creation!"*

He truly did enjoy the good things in life. He wasn't afraid to indulge himself. He made friends easily and kept them long. His mailing list is astonishing, touching every continent.

He credited his parents for giving his principles and values based on sound socialist philosophy. He had

a hunger for justice and spoke out in a forthright manner whenever he saw injustice.

Like many priests I was challenged by Charlie. He was always aiming at excellence, especially in the celebration of the Liturgy. His example of always trying to reach and maintain high standards helped encourage others to do the same. Innovation exhilarated Charlie. He had a thirst for the new – balanced by a respect and love for the old. He used to tease people by saying *'Constant change is here to stay!'*

One of his greatest gifts was that he gave people permission to fail. He had this unconditional acceptance of where a person was at in their life. He never confused the sin with the sinner. It's always OK to be you. He was unassuming, wise, tolerant and totally accepting; a valued and trusted counsellor; a man of immense compassion; he had an astonishing breadth of social contacts and friendships. It really amused him to think that if he put all of his friends together in one place there would not be – shall we say – total harmony.

Everything that has happened since his death was scripted by the man himself. He left very detailed instructions on everything. There is one final duty to discharge. He asked forgiveness and pardon from anyone he has hurt or anyone who feels short changed. In particular he asks pardon from anyone who no longer walks the faith journey in this community because of him. To balance that I would have to say that over the past months I have heard a few people say that they have stopped coming to St John's because they couldn't handle the pace of change. They shopped around other parishes but found themselves returning here. As one man said, *'You might not agree with everything he does but the celebration of the Liturgy has quality and dignity.'*

Fifteen years ago I preached at Charlie's silver jubilee Mass. I left the last words to Karl Rahner whose description of Tomorrow's Priest has been such an inspiration to so many. These are the words:

'Tomorrow's priest will be a man able to listen, to whom every individual matters, even though he be of no social or political importance; a man in whom one can confide; a man who practices the holy folly, or tries to, of bearing not only his own burden but also the next man's; a man who, though he had the wherewithal and is no weakling, does not join in the desperate, neurotic pursuit of money or enjoyment and other painkillers for the dreadful disappointment of existence, but proves by his life that voluntary self-sacrifice out of love of the Crucified is possible and liberating.'

I added that then to become the priest of tomorrow he would need our encouragement and prayers.

With the benefit of hindsight now I realise that I was wrong. Charlie was trained in a pre-conciliar Church to serve in a pre-conciliar Church. Even as he was being ordained the goalposts were being shifted. With the Second Vatican Council in session, the Church was changing fast. He managed to take all the changes on board, he managed to understand them and implement them better than anyone I know. I now realise that is because Charlie always was the priest of tomorrow!

I join with you in giving thanks to God for the gift his life has been to so many, conscious that there are people on every continent who share our deep loss. Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord and let perpetual light shine upon him. May he rest in peace.'

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